

and find a cafe without any customers and have
two glasses of Arabic tea and a glass
of creme de menthe with lemonade.

At the corner of rue Berger and rue du Louvre
a tourist bus turns in front of me
the tourists stare out through the thick and tinted glass
like dulled aquarium fish,
they make the very buildings ill with their
air-conditioned fear.
They are gone as quickly as they came.
The churches clang iron sighs of relief.

I had planned a longer walk
but the sky commenced
another sermon of rain.
Back in my room,
lying back, hands triangled behind my head,
I thought, "What is Paris?"

It's a cigar
it's a tambourine
it's God and architects
being frivolous
it's a city where I have knelt —
feverish pilgrim
amongst
its nectars
and nicotines.

12 MILES SHORT OF MEXICO

I dry-skated 'round the room,
I smoked about a hectare.
I scratched down
all my thoughts on paper
but they all flew off to be mosquitoes ...
the case remained
an iron egg.

I went down to where
all the bathing suits are broken,
flicking silver.
The newsboy told me he'd never seen
so much lightning in a dress.

A hawk's beak between piano keys,
a weather vane in the collection box
and a pair of wide awake shoes
were the only clues around.

And the captain's
never been sober since he's been in dry dock
and says
that whisky is just the devil's tears
and it's always been that way.

The troopers got her just
12 miles short of Mexico;
she looked like just so much pigmeat in a dish.
The townsfolk had never seen such a
pepper rain.

— Peter Bakowski

St. Kilda, Victoria, Australia

DADA DENTISTRY

my dentist is a great guy and a wise-ass.
his wife is a beautiful woman
and a wise-ass.
they make it almost fun
to go to the dentist,
especially since, when we can time the appointment right,
we end up eating carne asada afterwards and/or
getting shitfaced.

carl enjoys embarrassing or entertaining his assistants
with references to the pubic hairs he is
ostensibly picking from my teeth.
he recoils like dagwood bumstead
from the fumes of the general anesthetic
with which i have been known to numb myself.
once he wrapped my moustache
around his polishing brush.

each time we get together
we talk about climbing mount whitney.
neither of us is doing anything
to prepare himself for this ascent
but, who knows, maybe one day we will
get in touch on a friday afternoon
and head for lone pine.

earl outdid himself last week when,
to the dismay of the new assistant,
he approached the chair with,

"i see the toad has been getting a little sun —
or is that liver disease?"